

# **SECTION A**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **CONTENTS**

Why Pre-Service Training?

What about Other Types of Training?

What is Here and How to Use It

Other Tips for Finding Your Way Around this Manual

Active Learning: The Essential Tool

Starting Strong

Matrix

Glossary

# Introduction

## WHY CONDUCT PRE-SERVICE TRAINING?

**This manual is designed to help AmeriCorps programs plan and deliver effective pre-service training (PST).**

**What is pre-service training?** *Pre-service* training goes well beyond simple orientation. It is given to members before they begin -- or at the beginning of -- their service. Training provided during their period of service is called *in-service* training.

### **Pre-service training has many uses and values:**

- **Pre-service training prepares members for their year of service.** PST can help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to "get the job done."
- **The process of building a strong sense of team (or esprit de corps) begins with pre-service training.** This is a chance for your members to get to know each other, and for members, program staff, and site supervisors to form partnerships. It is also a chance to establish reasonable expectations -- on the part of members, staff, and partners.
- **Pre-service training should begin to cultivate the "big picture" of national service** -- what it means to be part of a movement that is both national and local, how direct service connects to larger issues, and how the ethic of service and an enriched sense of responsibility can begin now to continue throughout your members' lives.
- **Pre-service training begins the process of understanding service-learning.** Members learn about service-learning principles, values, and practices. PST provides members with preparation and planning time for the year of community service that they are about to experience. It also offers an opportunity for structured pre-service reflection.
- **Pre-service training lets you get a sense of your members' strengths, weaknesses, and ongoing supervisory and training needs.** This will help guide you in planning and implementing in-service training and post-service planning efforts.

- **Pre-service training is the first opportunity for members to see your organization in action.** PST is a chance to teach them about your organization and how the agency and program relate to AmeriCorps nationally.
- **The planning and preparation for PST provide an opportunity for collaboration with the other organizations involved in your program.** You may train with others -- national direct grantees may bring together their chapters or affiliates; statewide or regional entities may include host sites or partner organizations as participants or as trainers.
- **Pre-service training has the potential to ensure program quality.** Good training will pay off in program outcomes, with members who know the purpose of their service and have the skills to accomplish program objectives. Investing up front in training may lead to savings later through higher retention rates and happier, more effective members.

## WHAT ABOUT OTHER TYPES OF TRAINING?

**While this manual focuses on AmeriCorps pre-service training, the materials and approaches are useful for most training.** *Section B: Training Design* provides extensive information ranging from logistics to training approaches that will lead even inexperienced trainers successfully through the process of planning and delivering training. *Section C: Training Topics & Activities* offers 35 model experiential activities, complete with detailed notes for the trainer and instruction sheets for participants, on topics useful to members and to volunteers and staff of community organizations. This manual offers much that you will find useful not only for AmeriCorps pre-service training, but also for in-service training, staff or host site supervisor training, or training for other national service programs, such as AmeriCorps\*VISTA, National Senior Service Corps, and Learn and Serve.

**Much of the information is appropriate or easily adaptable for in-service training** (see *Use of Activities for In-Service Training*, page 240, in the introduction to the Training Topics & Activities section). For ideas on training for post-service planning, see *Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps*. Although this workbook is geared to members, it can also help in post-service planning sessions. To obtain copies of any of these materials, see the box on the next page.

## RESOURCES: REQUESTING COPIES OF THE MANUALS

For copies of *Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training* -- including a computer disk (WordPerfect 5.1/5.2 files) of the worksheets and activities contained here -- or *Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps*, please contact:

National Service Resource Center/ETR Associates  
P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830  
Telephone: (800) 860-2684 or (831) 438-4060  
TTY: (831) 461-0205  
Fax: (831) 430-9471  
E-mail: [jenniferr@etr.org](mailto:jenniferr@etr.org)  
Website: <http://www.etr.org/NSRC/>

or

Corporation for National Service, Training and Technical Assistance Unit  
Telephone: (202) 606-5000 ext. 106

## WHAT IS HERE AND HOW TO USE IT

**This guide provides information to help you decide what kind of formal pre-service training is appropriate and possible for your program. The guide also helps you to design that training.**

**The guide is written specifically for AmeriCorps programs, both national direct grantees and subgrantees funded through state commissions.** It was created in direct response to needs identified by AmeriCorps programs and staff at the Corporation for National Service, through a national telephone assessment, and ongoing advice from an Advisory Group which includes AmeriCorps program directors, Corporation staff, training experts, and an AmeriCorps member. The entire manual reflects program and member input. This manual was revised in the spring of 1996 based on feedback from AmeriCorps programs that used the preliminary manual during the previous fall and winter, and updated in Spring of 1998 before reprinting.

**This manual is not a one-size-fits-all curriculum for pre-service training.** AmeriCorps is a flexible program which allows communities to define their own needs and structure programs to meet those needs. No one curriculum could allow for all the vast diversity among AmeriCorps programs.

**Rather, it is like a cookbook from which you can pick and choose.** It offers guidance on how to prepare a meal (pre-service training), and describes some cooking (training) methods and ingredients (training topics) that you may want to use. It also offers some recipes (activities) you can try.

The guide is divided into four sections:

### ***Section A: Introduction***

**This section describes the manual.** Why conduct pre-service training? What can be found in these pages and how should you use them? What is active learning, and why is it essential? Also in this introduction are a matrix which can help you decide in which chapters of the manual you are most interested, and a glossary which explains AmeriCorps terms and training terms used throughout the manual.

### ***Section B: Training Design***

**This section leads you through the process of planning and designing a training that will meet the needs of your program.**

**Read this section in its entirety.** Its parts include:

- Chapter 1: Decision Making about Pre-Service Training
- Chapter 2: Developing a Pre-Service Training Plan/Package
- Chapter 3: Preparing Trainers
- Chapter 4: Evaluating Pre-Service Training
- Chapter 5: Supporting Materials

**First, plan the training.** You will answer these questions: How many days will your training run? What will be the mix of centralized and decentralized training -- how much will be done at the national level? State level? At each service site? What will be the content? How much of the training will focus on site-specific skills and how much will focus on skills like communication and conflict resolution that all members need? What about teambuilding? AmeriCorps administrative matters?

**Once you have determined your training parameters, the manual guides you through designing the training materials themselves.** It provides information on setting agendas, developing experiential learning activities, choosing interactive training methods, and designing handouts, as well as hints for hiring and using training consultants, preparing outside presenters, developing each component of a training package, and developing a PST if you have less than one month before training begins. Materials include sample pre-service training outlines; practical background materials on service-learning, cooperative learning, experiential learning, and

adult learning; and various forms, such as a checklist of all the logistical and planning tasks required for PST, a sample chart of desired PST outcomes, and a format for a training outline.

### ***Section C: Training Topics & Activities***

**This section provides practical materials for training topics frequently covered in PST.**

**You do not need to read this entire section. Instead, choose topics from this list:**

- Chapter 6: What Every Member Must Know
- Chapter 7: AmeriCorps Affiliation and Teambuilding
- Chapter 8: Leadership and Self-Understanding
- Chapter 9: Working Effectively in Groups
- Chapter 10: Organizational Culture and Norms
- Chapter 11: Diversity and Multiculturalism
- Chapter 12: Community-Related Skills
- Chapter 13: Planning and Evaluation
- Chapter 14: Community Projects

Each chapter contains an introduction, several sample activities that you can modify and use during your PST -- each complete with detailed Trainer's Notes and Member Instructions -- and supporting information related to the activities. We have also included:

- Material to use for prepared newsprint or overheads
- Information to form the basis for lecturettes
- Hints for using the activity effectively
- Suggested variations
- Tips on how to customize the activity

### ***Section D: Resources***

**This section provides a list of related resources, including:**

- An annotated bibliography organized by subject
- A list of people and organizations you can contact for further information or assistance

**Note that this manual does not attempt to cover the content of the four priority skill areas** -- education, public safety, human needs, and the environment -- and the specific technical skills (tutoring, victim assistance) needed to carry out programs; it does, however, suggest where you can find this information.

## OTHER TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THIS MANUAL

**The matrix, page 11, located at the end of this *Introduction* is designed to help you find the information you need in the manual.** We hope that using it makes designing and delivering pre-service training easier, more efficient, more successful, and more enjoyable.

**The manual is in a three-ring binder for easy use and copying.** The format of the manual uses wide margins so you have a place to make notes. Feel free to copy any part of this manual; our only requirement is that you retain on each page the information identifying the manual title *Starting Strong*, its developer MOSAICA, and its funder AmeriCorps.

**This manual uses a variety of graphic symbols and formats to help you find what you need.**

**Hints** or special ideas appear in boxes throughout the manual; see below for a sample of how they are presented in the text.

**Time** required to do activities is listed at the beginning of each activity.

References in *italics* indicate where in the manual you will find related materials in other sections, chapters, worksheets, or supporting materials or information.

**Throughout the manual, boxes highlight information or provide examples.** There are several types of boxes, each with a different purpose and format:

### **CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE INFORMATION**

Boxes providing guidelines or other information from the Corporation for National Service are placed in shaded boxes with single-line borders.

---

Hint: Special ideas for using the materials are included in unshaded, half-boxes with thick top and bottom borders.

---

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTED INFORMATION

Other boxes highlight information in the text or provide examples; these boxes are unshaded boxes with double borders. These include: **Lessons Learned** boxes which describe the experiences of AmeriCorps programs and members; **Resources** boxes which give information on how to find out more about a topic; and boxes with **Other Highlighted Information**, such as examples, summaries of text, and content information for use in preparing newsprint or lecturettes.

### ACTIVE LEARNING: THE ESSENTIAL TOOL

Since there is so much information you want to transmit to the members, you may be tempted to choose the "quick" method and submit your members to days and days of lectures. Resist the temptation -- lectures may save time, but they are not effective. According to the National Training Laboratory, the retention rate for lectures is only 5%, compared to 75% when participants practice by doing and 90% when participants teach others during training (see page 88). **Your pre-service training will be more productive for your program and energizing for your members if you minimize *passive* learning techniques like lecture and maximize *active* learning techniques.**

**This manual is based on two major applications of active learning: the experiential learning model and cooperative learning strategies.**

The **experiential learning model** includes five inductive learning stages:

1. Experiencing
2. Reporting or publishing
3. Processing
4. Generalizing
5. Applying



In the experiential learning model, members gain knowledge and understanding, explore their own attitudes, see skills in action and develop them through practice, learn from each other, and validate their own learning through structured experiences (see page 85-86). Service-learning builds on experiential learning, using community service as the experience and adding two stages before experiencing: (1) identifying the community service project based on identified community needs and (2) planning and preparation for the project (see page 191).

**Cooperative learning** offers a set of instructional strategies in which members work together to learn new material or solve problems (see page 197). Cooperative learning groups are particularly appropriate for adult learners (see page 193) and for individuals who learn well in group-focused cooperative environments rather than through competitive, individualistic approaches. They encourage the teamwork most AmeriCorps projects need.

**Active learning techniques shift the focus of the training presentation from the trainer to the participants** -- the trainer becomes a coach or facilitator who helps members engage in hands-on activities where they practice skills, teach each other, and work through problems and tasks in groups. The trainer sets up the activity, monitors the progress of participants, and then helps the members process the information and solutions the groups develop (see page 205).

**Less experienced trainers have found experiential approaches, especially cooperative learning with its well-structured small group activities, a sound formula for training success.** Not only does experiential training increase member involvement, knowledge, and skill retention, it is also far less demanding for trainers than more passive approaches. Developing the activities (or customizing activities in this manual) takes some time and planning, but the actual training develops its own momentum, and everyone -- trainers, members, host site personnel, resource people -- shares responsibility for "making it work."

**Your PST should provide a mix of active learning environments to fit the varied learning styles of your members.** Active learning techniques include:

- Case studies
- Discussion groups
- Other small-group tasks and problem solving
- Question-and-answer sessions
- Role plays
- Games
- Peer teaching and training
- Journal writing
- Self-evaluation tools
- On-site observation
- Community surveys
- A one-day community service project that members help plan

**Active learning techniques allow you to use each activity for more than one purpose.**

Cooperative learning structures and group problem-solving tasks require that members talk and work together, and they begin to become teams *while* working on a specific skill-building exercise. When members are involved in group work, the trainer is free not only to provide coaching to those groups that need assistance, but also to stand back and observe the members in action. You can look for the natural leaders who are gaining self-confidence, observe which teams are working together well and which need a little extra assistance, and get a sense of individual members' skills so you can build on them.

**The use of active learning as the basis for PST is part of the assumptions that form the basis for this manual -- as well as part of the AmeriCorps training philosophy.**

MOSAICA also strongly recommends that you design your training with these additional assumptions:

- **AmeriCorps programs are unlike other programs --** While AmeriCorps programs are similar to and can learn a lot from many volunteer programs and leadership programs, many characteristics, such as member stipends, Corporation for National Service requirements, and the idea of national service, are specific to AmeriCorps.
- **There is wide variety among AmeriCorps programs --** Some programs are rural, others urban. Some send their members out in teams or crews, while others use individual placements. Some have their members work directly with community members, and others have members recruit and supervise volunteers who do the direct work.
- **PST should be a partnership among members, program staff, service site staff, and host site supervisors -- including everyone.** Leaving out the site supervisors, for example, may result in members not receiving training in much needed site-specific skills.
- **PST should include a community activity that members help to plan as well as implement.**
- **Members must be given the opportunity to participate in all phases of the PST --** member participation should begin *before* the training. Members or potential members should be involved in identifying training needs.
- **All training should be practical and directly relevant to member placements.** If members do not see the PST as directly relevant, they may not give it their full attention. Illustrate each activity's relevance to their service assignments; bring the lessons home.

- **You will need to customize the sample activities in the manual to meet your program needs.** Sample activities such as case studies contained in this manual are only examples and cannot reflect the diversity of programs and communities. Modify activities and supporting materials to reflect your program and community. A computer disk is included with this manual for easier editing.

## STARTING STRONG

Pre-service training can help to get your program off to a strong start! This manual will help to you design and deliver effective pre-service training. It provides a model that combines teaching skills with building the sense of team spirit that is important for AmeriCorps. *Starting Strong* will guide you to pre-service training that is practical and enjoyable, both for your members and for you!

### ABOUT THE MANUAL

This manual was written by MOSAICA: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism under Cooperative Agreement CA95-15 with the Corporation for National Service. You can reach us at:

MOSAICA: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism  
1000 16th Street, N.W., Suite 604  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: (888) 409-2600 toll-free  
(202) 887-0620  
Fax: (202) 887-0812  
Website: <http://www.mosaica.org/natl.html>